Self-governance is embedded in our Constitution and our consciousness. Jammu and Kashmir already enjoys autnomy under the Indian Constitutiion and has in place a democratically elected government. Our system has the flexibility to accommodate even groups who have remained outside the political process. Government is willing to hold discussions with all groups or individuals who shun the path of violence. On the other hand, there is only nominal autonomy in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and there has been no popular election in Gilgit and Baltistan, which does not even have a legal/constitutional status.

We are willing to hear from Pakistan what steps would be taken for the creation of representative institutions on the other side of the Line of Control (LoC). These representative institutions on either side of the LoC can work together in areas of common concern and issues, like tourism promotion, environment, among others. However, as Prime Minister has stated, on several occasions, there can be no redrawing of boundaries, transfer of territory or another partition of the country.

Purchase of oil fields in Syria

†435. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that U.S.A. has raised her objection on oil field purchase by India in Syria;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereon;

(c) whether keeping in view the national interests Government would allow companies engaged in the field of oil production to purchase oil fields in Syria; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The matter was raised informally by the U.S.

(b) The Government rejects any such objection.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.